CLAIMS

1. In a multifunctional peripheral (MFP), a text overlaying method comprising:

accepting a document;

accepting a text overlay message;

merging the overlay message with the document; and,

creating a merged document.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

creating a paper media merged document.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein accepting a document includes accepting a document selected from the group including paper media and electronically formatted documents.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein accepting an electronically formatted document includes accepting a document selected from the group including text and image documents.

5. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

electronically transmitting the merged document.

6. The method of claim 2 wherein accepting a document includes:

accepting a paper media document;

converting the document to rasterized data; and,

generating a first image;

wherein accepting an overlay message includes:

accepting an electronically formatted overlay message;

converting the overlay message to a Page Description Language (PDL) file;

processing the PDL file as a print job; and,

generating a second image as rasterized data.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein merging the overlay message with the document includes:

adding the first image to the second image; and,

generating a third image.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein printing the merged document includes sending the third image to an MFP print engine.

9. The method of claim 6 wherein converting the overlay message to a PDL file includes converting the overlay message to a PDL file selected from the group including Printer Control Language (PCL) and PostScript (PS).

10. The method of claim 1 wherein merging the overlay message with the document includes accepting position commands for positioning the overlay message with respect to the document.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein merging the overlay message with the document includes accepting message characteristics selection commands chosen from the group including message size, message shape, font, color, and print options.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein accepting message characteristics selection commands includes:

supplying user interface (UI) message characterization prompts at an MFP front panel; and,

accepting user commands from the UI.

13. The method of claim 10 wherein accepting position commands for positioning the overlay message with respect to the document includes:

on an MFP display, presenting an image of the document;

using a UI associated with the display, supplying prompts for superimposing the overlay message on the document;

receiving user commands on the UI;

positioning the overlay message in response to the commands.

14. The method of claim 1 wherein accepting an overlay message includes:

receiving an ASCII code timestamp, including a date and time, from an MFP controller;

converting the ASCII code to a timestamp PDL file; and,

generating a rasterized overlay timestamp message.

15. The method of claim 1 wherein accepting an overlay message includes accepting an overlay message from an interface selected from the group including a scanner, stylus, smart card, virtual keyboard, and wireless personal digital assistant (PDA) interface.

16. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

generating dynamic data selected from the group including document page count, timestamp, MFP name, and MFP identification (ID); and,

wherein merging the overlay message with the document includes additionally merging the dynamic data with the document.

17. In a multifunctional peripheral (MFP), a text overlaying system comprising:

a first subsystem having an interface to accept a document and an interface to supply document rasterized data;

a second subsystem having an interface to accept a text overlay message and an interface to supply overlay rasterized data; and,

a merge unit having an interface to accept the document rasterized data, an interface to accept overlay rasterized data, the merge unit merging the overlay message with the document and supplying a merged document at an interface.

18. The system of claim 17 further comprising:

a print engine having an interface to accept the merged document and an interface to supply a paper media merged document.

19. The system of claim 17 wherein the first subsystem accepts a document selected from the group including paper media and electronically formatted documents.

20. The system of claim 19 wherein the first subsystem accepts an electronically formatted document selected from the group including text and image documents.

21. The system of claim 17 further comprising:

a transceiver having an interface to accept the merged document and a network-connected interface to electronically transmit the merged document.

22. The system of claim 18 wherein the first subsystem is a copier pipeline accepting a paper media document and generating a first image of rasterized data; and,

wherein the second subsystem is a print pipeline accepting an electronically formatted overlay message, the print pipeline converting the overlay message to a Page Description Language (PDL) file, and processing the PDL file as a print job, to generate a second image of rasterized data.

23. The system of claim 22 wherein the merge unit adds the first image to the second image, and generates a third image.

24. The system of claim 22 wherein the print pipeline converts the overlay message to a PDL file selected from the group including Printer Control Language (PCL) and PostScript (PS).

25. The system of claim 17 wherein the merge unit has a user interface (UI) to accept position commands, and positions the overlay message position with respect to the document position, in response to the position commands.

26. The system of claim 25 wherein the merge unit UI accepts message characteristics selection commands chosen from the group including message size, message shape, font, color, and print options, and modifies the overlay message in response to the selected message characteristics.

27. The system of claim 26 wherein the merge unit UI is enabled as an MFP front panel, including a display and keypad.

28. The system of claim 27 wherein the MFP front panel UI displays an image of the document, supplies prompts for superimposing the overlay message on the document, and accepts user commands; and,

wherein the merge unit positions the overlay message in response to the commands accepted at the MFP front panel UI.

29. The system of claim 17 further comprising:

an MFP controller having an interface to supply an ASCII code timestamp, including a date and time; and,

wherein the second subsystem accepts the timestamp from the MFP controller, converts the ASCII code to a PDL file, and generates a rasterized overlay timestamp message.

30. The system of claim 17 wherein the second subsystem accepts overlay messages using an interface selected from the group including a scanner, stylus, smart card, virtual keyboard, and wireless personal digital assistant (PDA) interfaces.

31. The method of claim 17 further comprising:

an MFP controller having an interface to supply dynamic data selected from the group including document page count, timestamp, MFP name, and MFP identification (ID); and,

wherein the merge unit has an interface to accept the dynamic data and additionally merges the dynamic data with the document.